

**Database committee**

Following Alan Bundy's comments in 'Frontline' on public library statistics the following may be of interest to readers.

In August of this year a report was presented to the State Librarians' Council by the State Library Service of Western Australia assessing the feasibility of establishing statistical databases of Australian public library and state/territory/national library operations. The Council has been basically supportive of this proposal and has endorsed the establishment of a committee with representatives from all state and territory library services, the National Library and each state/territory public library service, to develop the structure and content of the two databases. The co-operation of the Public Library Section of the LAA is also being called upon. Both it and the General Council of the LAA have already endorsed the proposal in principle.

At this stage it is proposed that the databases should include a range of output and input measures. For public libraries it may include

such input measures as staff, the number of branches, acquisitions and holdings, and financial data. Output measures could be the number of reference enquiries, exchanges, hours open, population served, membership and items lent. For the state/territory/national library services input measures could be similar; output measures may, however, be expanded to include the number of visitors, items used in the library, photocopies, interlibrary loans, database searches and cataloguing.

Later this year workshops will be held in each state/territory to enable public libraries to discuss the project and to have input into deciding exactly what statistics are to be gathered. If you have any enquiries about the project, please contact Jacqui Ecclestone, Convener, Statistical Database Committee c/- State Library Service of Western Australia, (09) 427 3327.

Jacqui Ecclestone  
Executive Officer  
State Library Service of Western Australia

**Innovative spark**

I would like to extend my appreciation to all those people who organised the recent library conferences, especially the volunteer guides. I urge all association members to attend conferences if they can. You may get the motivation or innovative spark from a lecture or a colleague, that will improve your future and that of the profession.

They tell me Perth is quite nice in August and we do need more innovation.

Alan A. Flores  
Chief Librarian  
NSW Department of Health

**Library Twins**

Fifty NSW public libraries have been 'twinned'- joined to a library in Illinois - as part of the 'Bridging the Distance' program launched on 2 August at the Sate Library of NSW.

The co-operative venture includes the exchange of informative exhibitions, relevant book collections and visits to Illinois by many of Australia's best known writers - all in addition to the 50 newly created library 'twins'. The program has been made possible with backing from the NSW Bicentennial Council and the Australia Council.

Similar exhibitions and book collections, authors, films, maps, pictures and even some staff will arrive via the 'twinned' library program over the coming months. Mr Jim Edgar, Illinois Secretary of State and State Librarian, was enthusiastic about broadening cultural awareness between the two states. Ms Crook says, 'this is the central point. Not only will our respective institutions benefit but the primary focus will be the millions of people who make such good use of both the Illinois and the NSW library services.'

The NSW exhibition deals pictorially with life, literature and libraries in the state and it will tour throughout Illinois over the next year or so.

A collection of 100 books will feature strongly in the Illinois program - as a showcase for Australian writers. The NSW collection is diverse - including Manning Clark's *History of Australia* to Dorothy Wall's Blinky Bill and from Franklin Award winner, *Dancing on Coral*, by Glenda Adams, to Tom Keneally's *The Playmaker*.

According to Alison Crook, NSW State Librarian, 'the entire program is innovative and exciting and involves many additional activities between ourselves and Illinois. But perhaps the most enduring aspect will be the ongoing relationship between these fifty newly formed twins.' The pairing of the libraries was based on geographic and population factors. Ms Crook praised the American's networking system saying, 'the American library network is really very well advanced and it is most helpful from our standpoint to be in such close contact with the state-wide operation in Illinois. We see from the State Library's activities here that technology, broader service delivery and networking are key factors in modern libraries and anything we can gain from the American experience will be of considerable value.'

**REVIEW**

Ralph and Amy Reid, *Into History*, 1988 \$27.50

The Reids have produced a very useful compendium. It fills a gap. The conception is good and the range of information sought about the organisation is pretty comprehensive for the potential user. The format is a shade self-indulgent but the presentation is very clean and is not only self-indexing but also lavishly indexed by name.

The number of entries which record simply 'no reply to correspondence' is a reflection on the problems of communication with local societies (though some are not small and others not local). What is worrying is that a fair number of the defaulters have museum or library addresses concealed behind a post office box number eg Orange, Goulburn. Such organisations really should do better, for their own reputation as well as for possible customers.

The list of 'addresses unknown' in Appendix A can be shortened: I am sending the Reids some recent addresses of a few historical societies.

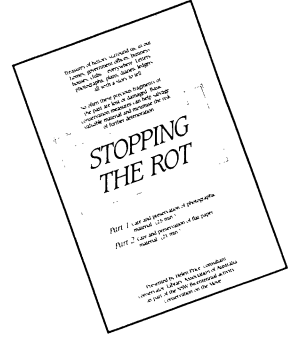
Professor Ian Jack,  
Department of History  
The University of Sydney

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